



# CONNECTICUT RENAISSANCE

*Reclaim your life*

BOARD PRESIDENT  
ALECIA ANDREWS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
KATHLEEN DESCHENES

February 24, 2023

Good Evening Senator Osten and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Kathleen Deschenes and I am the CEO for CT Renaissance. We are an organization that provides mental health, addiction and criminal justice services throughout Fairfield and New Haven counties. We operate outpatient behavioral health clinics, community programs and residential programs that serve adults and adolescents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 6659, the Governor's Budget. I am here to request that you increase funding for community nonprofits during the biennium by 9% in FY24, and 7% in FY25, and to index future increases to inflation.

At CT Renaissance, with the COLA's we have received over the last two years from our DOC + CSSD State Departments, we have been able to provide salary increases to our staff for the first time in 13 years! Imagine going 13 years without a raise as the cost of rent, utilities and especially gas rose astronomically.

However, with these increases, our lowest paid position earns \$15.50 or \$28,000 a year. According to national reports, CT is the 10<sup>th</sup> most expensive state to rent in. You would have to earn \$41K annually to afford a one-bedroom apartment in CT. So, most of our staff work two jobs, some three, just to be able to afford basic living expenses.

I will say, our staff were so grateful to receive an increase and so appreciative of your support. As the CEO, I too am grateful for your support and additional funding that has allowed us to not only increase salaries but to attend to much needed facility repairs – things like roof repairs, replacing a 40 year old boiler and updating bathrooms that hadn't been attended to in years. How can we expect our clients to get well in an environment that is in disrepair?

The majority of the clients we serve are living at or below the poverty level. Among our multiple programs, we operate three Work Release Programs for men returning to the community from incarceration. They receive case management services and work with a job developer to find competitive employment. We also refer our clients to our outpatient behavioral health clinics.

The majority of our client have a mental illness or an addiction - some have both. In addition to providing reentry services, we address their emotional and physical needs in order to prepare these men for a successful life in the community.

Please continue to support the individuals we serve and programs like this that are essential in our communities.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen Deschenes".

Kathleen Deschenes, CEO